

MINUTES OF THE  
MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY GROUP

November 8, 1999  
MAG Office  
302 North First Avenue  
Phoenix, Arizona

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Debbie Kohn, Avondale, Chairperson	Jim Hull, Mesa
*Betsy Wise, Carefree	Duncan Miller, Paradise Valley
*Sondra Finkbeiner, Cave Creek	Ralph Spencer for Sandy Teetsel, Peoria
*Bill Mitchell, Chandler	Greg Binder, Phoenix
*Peter Putterman, Fountain Hills	Jamie Oman-Saltmarsh, Scottsdale
*Shawn Woolley, Gilbert	John Laue, Tempe
*Doug Sandstrom, Gila Bend	*Ralph Velez, Tolleson
Jerry Wightman, Glendale	Sabra Mousavi, ADOT
Jack Blonski for Layne Sutton, Goodyear	Eddie Caine, RPTA
*Horatio Skeete, Litchfield Park	
*Cary Parker, Maricopa County	

\*Members neither present nor represented by proxy

OTHERS PRESENT

Heidi Pahl, MAG	Harry Wolfe, MAG
Audrey Skidmore, MAG	Jim Wortham, Phoenix
Rita Walton, MAG	Glenn Stoneman, Norstan

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 a.m. by Debbie Kohn. Ms. Kohn thanked everyone for coming on such short notice. Roll call was taken by Heidi Pahl.

2. Recommendation of a Proposer for the MAG Regional Videoconferencing System Project

Debbie Kohn explained that on November 3, 1999 the Proposer Evaluation Team reviewed the proposals for the MAG Regional Videoconferencing System Project submitted on October 29, 1999 and recommended a proposer. Ms. Kohn thanked the team members for their hard work.

Rita Walton gave background on the MAG Regional Videoconferencing System Project. Ms. Walton began by stating that the MAG Regional Council identified videoconferencing as a high priority at the 1998 and 1999 Regional Council Retreats. Following this, Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) granted \$1.5 million dollars in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds for the Telecommuting and Teleconferencing Program of which about \$1 million was reserved for the MAG

Videoconferencing Project. She said that FHWA suggested the videoconferencing project be divided into two parts: needs assessment and procurement of equipment.

Ms. Walton explained that in September 1998, an RFP was issued for a consultant study to determine our videoconferencing needs. She noted that on October 8, 1998 the Proposer's Conference for this study was held. Based on a question about conflict of interests, Ms. Walton suggested that any proposer who felt there might be a conflict should write a letter to MAG explaining why there would be no conflict. Four letters were received. Rita Walton noted that six proposals were received and each proposer was interviewed. At the interview each proposer was questioned about their ability to remain impartial during this process. She noted that a unanimous decision was made to recommend Norstan Consulting for the needs assessment study. The study began at the end of December 1998.

Rita Walton noted that in May, 1999 MAG held a Manufacturer Demonstration where four manufacturers were invited to demonstrate their equipment. She stated that only three manufacturers accepted the invitation to demonstrate their equipment.

Rita Walton explained that in July, 1999 the consultant completed the needs assessment study.

Ms. Walton reported that in August, 1999 MAG held a Videoconferencing Forum where videoconferencing users came to share ideas and experiences. She also noted that a Videoconferencing Hands-on Session was held to allow for use of the videoconferencing equipment by the four manufacturers invited to the Manufacturer Demonstration.

Ms. Walton explained that following those events MAG staff and MAGTAG made a recommendation for videoconferencing equipment and network based on performance standards identified in a table that was distributed at the MAGTAG meeting. She said that the MAG Regional Council approved the recommendation and issuance of an RFP for videoconferencing equipment in September 1999. That same month a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued. Rita Walton emphasized that a RFP was used instead of the state contract to ensure that MAG would get the best videoconferencing solution.

Rita Walton stated that on October 8, 1999 a Proposer's Conference was held. She noted that all questions and answers from the Proposer's Conference were posted on the MAG web site. Ms. Walton mentioned that at the Proposer's Conference questions were asked about the proposers being able to bid on alternative products not referenced in the RFP. She responded that the proposer must be responsive to the RFP, but may also propose any changes and enhancements the proposer feels would contribute to the success of the videoconferencing system. Ms. Walton also acknowledged that technology changes rapidly and we want to be sure that any new videoconferencing systems are included.

Ms. Walton explained that at noon on October 29, 1999 the proposals were submitted. She noted that at 9:44 a.m., View Tech submitted a letter to MAG and at 1:13 p.m US West submitted a fax. These documents both expressed concern about the procurement process. Debbie Kohn clarified that View Tech and US West did not submit a proposal.

Ms. Walton reported that on November 3, 1999 the Proposal Evaluation Team met and reached a unanimous recommendation on a proposer.

Rita Walton explained that MAG has been conferring with the attorney regarding the letters received. She stated that the MAG attorney reviewed the RFP and the Questions and Answers. The attorney recommends that, although the first RFP process was fair, in order to be cautious and conservative, we should reissue the RFP explicitly stating that all equipment meeting a certain criteria will be acceptable.

Jim Hull asked if the reissuance of the RFP will in fact satisfy the concern. Rita Walton responded that it is possible that the concern stemmed from the fact that Norstan sold all the equipment we asked for in the RFP. She noted that there are very few vendors who sell VTEL videoconferencing equipment, Latitude MeetingPlace audio conference server and the Ezenia multipoint control unit.

Jamie Oman-Saltmarsh asked how MAGTAG would judge the new proposals if an unfamiliar type of equipment is proposed. Debbie Kohn stated that we are trying to base the RFP on standards and criteria not on brand name and that such things as functionality, scalability, and cost are some of the standards we will be using.

Jim Hull asked if the proposed equipment is unfamiliar to MAGTAG, how would the equipment be evaluated. Rita Walton responded that it would be the responsibility of MAG staff and MAGTAG to draw on the expertise of knowledgeable people in reviewing the new equipment.

Jamie Oman-Saltmarsh asked whether Norstan had submitted a letter for the original contract. Rita Walton responded that both US West and Norstan submitted a letter.

Jamie Oman-Saltmarsh asked how Norstan explained they could ensure impartiality. Rita Walton noted that Norstan emphasized that their consulting division was separate from its sales division and that they would be making a recommendation on the best system to meet all our needs.

Jim Hull asked if Norstan sold any other brand name videoconferencing equipment. Rita Walton responded yes they sell other brand name videoconferencing equipment.

Jim Hull asked if the submitted proposals are now public documents. Rita Walton stated that until the process is complete, these documents are not available to the public and that they should be considered confidential.

Greg Binder stated that time is not the most critical issue but that the perception of impropriety is an important issue. Mr. Binder further added that long term operational issues, training, and transferring the knowledge to new hires are costs that we need to keep in mind.

Debbie Kohn stated that the revised RFP should state that the system has to be fully interoperable.

Sabra Mousavi asked if US West and View Tech were present at the Proposer's Conference. Rita Walton responded yes. Ms. Mousavi asked why they raised this issue at such a late date. Rita Walton said that she did not know.

Jack Blonski stated that he would like Ms. Walton to repeat what the attorney recommended. Ms. Walton repeated that the attorney recommended reissuing the RFP with specifications for the equipment rather than naming specific equipment.

Greg Binder asked if we are being held hostage unnecessarily. Debbie Kohn responded that this way, there may be fewer problems in the long term.

Sabra Mousavi stated that she agrees with Debbie Kohn but she would also recommend that someone communicate with US West to determine their precise concerns.

Duncan Miller asked if reissuing the RFP has any effect on the funding. Rita Walton replied that it should have no effect on the funding.

Jim Hull asked if we should contact vendors and ask them if there is anything that would preclude them from bidding as it would be nice to hear objections at the beginning of the process. Debbie Kohn stated that she does not know if we are going to be able to satisfy everyone.

Rita Walton assured MAGTAG that the MAG attorney will review all correspondence and the revised RFP before it is issued.

Lyle Shaughnessy asked what type of a challenge we would face if the RFP were rewritten with input from vendors. Debbie Kohn replied that there was no vendor input with the first RFP.

John Laue expressed his concern for the reissuance of the RFP, but overall he was supportive of the decisions and efforts made by MAG staff, the Proposal Evaluation Team and MAGTAG.

Jim Hull stated that from his standpoint we should follow the attorney's advice not to proceed. He asked if it would be possible for staff to discuss the issues that were brought up at the MAGTAG meeting with the attorney prior to reissuing of RFP. Rita Walton replied yes.

It was moved by Jim Hull and seconded by Eddie Caine to recommend the rejection of current proposals and that MAG staff work with the attorney to reissue the RFP.

Jamie Oman-Saltmarsh said that she was totally confident in the entire RFP process. She stated that it had been one of the most thorough professional processes in which she participated. Eddie Caine stated that he believed that everything that could have been done was done. Ralph Spencer echoed those comments and he stated he could find no fault with our process. Rita Walton stated that MAG really appreciates MAGTAG's input and effort in this process.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.